

PREFACE*

Where is this book located in political thought today? In recent years, scholars, politicians, think tankers, journalists, and pundits have conducted an anxious debate about how democracy may succumb to what they call populism. Such thinkers do not fear a revival of late-nineteenth-century agrarian unrest in America, when Mary Pease told farmers they should raise less corn and more hell. But they have already published books such as John Judis, *The Populist Explosion* (2016),¹ Jan-Werner Muller, *What is Populism?* (2016),² Benjamin Page and Martin Gilens, *Democracy in America* (2017),³ Edward Luce, *The Retreat of Western Liberalism* (2017),⁴ Pankaj Mishra, *Age of Anger* (2017),⁵ Mark Lilla, *The Once and Future Liberal* (2017),⁶ David Runciman, *How Democracy Ends* (2018),⁷ Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, *How Democracies Die* (2018),⁸ William Galston, *Anti-Pluralism* (2018),⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Identity* (2018),¹⁰ Robert Kuttner, *Can Democracy Survive Global Capitalism?* (2018),¹¹ Barry Eichengreen, *The Populist Temptation* (2018),¹² Yascha Mounk, *The People vs. Democracy* (2018),¹³ John Campbell, *American Discontent* (2018),¹⁴ Paul Starr, *Entrenchment* (2019),¹⁵ and Sophia Rosenfeld, *Democracy and Truth* (2019).¹⁶

The debate has examined many trends and events to explain the recent rise of populist governments and the success of populist candidates for public office in many countries. Opinions vary, but most of the debaters agree that an underlying cause

* This book cites, and quotes from, the presidential addresses of fourteen presidents of the American Political Science Association (APSA). I found that those addresses were especially relevant to my project because their authors stepped back from personal research to comment knowledgeably on their discipline – for example, on what it should investigate, and on how it should report its findings. D.R.

of contemporary populism is the resentment many people feel, with considerable justification, because of disruptive changes forced on their lives by the modern economy, which may be described as capitalism, free enterprise, neoliberalism, globalization, or a market-based society.¹⁷

Some of those changes – in working conditions, in the distribution of wealth, in the use of drastically new products such as smartphones, and more – are regarded by American Political Science Association president (2019) Rogers Smith as belittling beliefs that frame virtuous lives, as challenging traditional stations in society, and as deflating narratives that inspire important groups of citizens. If this goes on, some vital social bonds may vanish and some essential democratic institutions may collapse.¹⁸

In these circumstances, various parties to the debate have discussed what modern societies might do to avoid sinking into full-blown populism. Here is not the place to discuss their recommendations, which are diverse and not always compatible with one another.¹⁹ Instead, *A Political Science Manifesto for the Age of Populism* proposes that, even while the debate continues in a general way, some scholars should target the overall crisis specifically in their research and teaching.

To that end, while the debaters continue to explore large-scale propositions about populism, what I will suggest is that some political scientists, in concert, should investigate and publicize cases of contemporary “resentment.” I will further suggest that, to achieve an effective focus, this sort of research should highlight one particular source of resentment, which is the destructive side of what economists call the process of “creative destruction.”

Such destruction, which I will discuss later, flows from economic innovations – such as automation, outsourcing, deindustrialization, globalization, privatization, financialization, digitalization, and temporary employment – that generate social disruptions, occupational dislocations, environmental damages, and personal injury to the point of breeding resentment, which fuels much of what happens, sometimes

undesirably, in American politics today.²⁰ People who analyze the nature of our times – in scholarly research, in news broadcasts, on social media, in talk shows, in families, in party forums, and among friends – often focus on issues that may not seem immediately economic but cultural, such as rage against immigrants or despair over waning family values.²¹ Even those issues, however, are usually fueled by elements of economic change, such as when citizens fear that immigrants will take from them good jobs that have not yet been outsourced to globalization, or when parents (and children) who yearn for closer relations at home are stressed out because many modern mothers and fathers must work long hours to make ends meet.²²

In this situation, drawing attention to the downsides of creative destruction may encourage, or even inspire, elected officials, journalists, campaign consultants, pundits, lobbyists, political activists, and ordinary voters to try to mitigate the damaging effects of economic change and therefore reduce resentment and its populist consequences. As if to endorse this strategy, President Emmanuel Macron, on December 10, 2018, in a nationally televised speech, responded to intimations of French populism by promising swift governmental action designed to reduce resentment among demonstrators who, he admitted, could not make a decent living in the modern economy.²³ In their anger, before Macron's speech, thousands of "yellow-vest" citizens took to French streets week after week to protest, sometimes violently, against a combination of high taxes and low wages that led them to conclude that politics as usual was no longer acceptable.

As I write these lines, yellow-vest demonstrations are continuing and no one knows if the tax cuts and wage increases that Macron promised will put the French populist genie back in its bottle. But that the French president spoke out as he did is an indication of seething passions waiting to be addressed.²⁴

Mostly in reference to America, I will suggest, starting in Chapter 1, a program of academic engagement with resentment, which I believe is the most powerful source of modern

populism. I seek in this book to enlist first of all political scientists, because they are my disciplinary colleagues. But I hope that what I write will also interest other scholars who care about public life, in disciplines such as sociology, anthropology, history, economics, geography, psychology, philosophy, religious studies, and more.

These men and women may rest assured professionally. Many of them rightly aspire to political neutrality, that is, to not taking sides between opposing sectors of society. However, academics need not shy away from the engagement I am about to recommend, because it violates no principles of responsible scholarship. That is so because to study resentment – why it arises, where it appears, and what it produces politically – is not a partisan project. Rather, from Republicans to Democrats, from the Tea Party to Occupy Wall Street, from Donald Trump to Bernie Sanders, from Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, from *The American Conservative* to *The Nation* magazines, from Hillsdale to Oberlin colleges, from MSNBC to Fox News, Americans agree that a good deal of resentment exists today and drives a large part of public life.²⁵

In those circumstances, to investigate, to teach, and to write about *populism* via currents of *resentment* that emerge from *creative destruction* is not a matter of taking sides but an exercise in highlighting exceptionally important facts.²⁶ For example, some fact-finding along these lines took place in Washington, DC, at the American Political Science Association's 2019 Annual Meeting & Exhibition, which was dedicated to the theme of "Populism and Privilege."